



BTA Adds e-automate Discussion Group

In this space, I occasionally like to share some about our BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups. The idea for the discussion groups grew in my front yard. Let me explain. It was May of 2020 — in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic — when I was mowing my yard and thinking about the industry's prevailing question of the day: "What do we do now?" I was also thinking about the then 94-year-old focus of BTA — dealers helping dealers — and about how the world had been thrust into the daily use of virtual meeting tools like Zoom. Without explaining further, you can see the result of the merger of these thoughts.



Today, there are six BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Groups that meet regularly via Zoom. Three of them are for owners and senior management, one is for sales managers and one is for service managers. (More on the sixth group in a moment.) For each of these groups, I strive to have non-competing dealer participants. The format is very simple. When group members register for the next call, they are asked a simple question: "What questions or topics would you like the group to address during the call?" Those questions or topics either get the conversation started or fill the entire hour. (I should note that while the challenges of the pandemic were initially the sole topic of discussion in the groups, we now talk about everything but the pandemic.)

I like to keep track of the numbers. For the five groups noted above, there are currently 143 members. Collectively, there have been 366 calls to date with total attendance of 4,748. Two of the groups meet twice each month; just this morning, BTA Dealers Helping Dealers Discussion Group Two had its

117th call. The group first met on May 7, 2020. Group One also meets twice each month. The other three groups meet monthly.

Using Group Two as an example, here are a few recent questions submitted for calls: How do you recognize high-performing employees in various departments? How do you like your CRM? What non-copier products do you like to sell? You get the idea, but that's only part of it. The group participants also communicate between calls via email, asking questions of one another. It has also been rewarding to see members of the groups meet in person for the first time at BTA events.

The headline to this column gave it away, but I noted above that we now have a sixth group — the only one that is not limited to non-competing dealers. The inaugural call of the BTA e-automate Elevate Discussion Group took place on April 23. We had 38 attendees. Among the many topics addressed in the call: Migration pains when moving from e-automate on-premise to cloud; coding manufacturer credits back to deals in e-automate; and equipment inventory processes. This group was born out of the in-person BTA e-automate Elevate event that took place on March 6 in Orlando, Florida.

Why am I sharing all of this? Because we would like you to join us in one of the discussion groups. There is no cost; it's part of your membership. And it's simple. Just email me at brent@bta.org and I'll email you a list of each group's members by company, city and state. You can then pick the group or groups best for you. What are you waiting for? Wouldn't you like to have your fellow dealers provide you with insight and guidance that could help you in your dealership? Join and you will soon see your group's members as your virtual board of directors, supportive dealer friends or both. I look forward to hearing from you. ■

— Brent Hoskins

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FLASHBACK



The association's magazine cover 48 years ago this month
— the NOMDA Spokesman, May 1977.